

74 COMMENTARY ON MACAULAY'S
HISTORY

The Toleration Act passed but the
comprehension bill
failed.

About the same time at which the
Toleration Bill be-
came law with the general concurrence of
public men, the
Comprehension Bill was, with a concurrence
not less
general, suffered to drop. The Toleration Bill
still ranks
among those great statutes which are epochs
in our con-
stitutional history. The Comprehension Bill is
forgotten.

No collector of antiquities has thought it
worth preserving.
A single copy, the same which Nottingham
presented to
the Peers, is still among our parliamentary
records, but
has been seen by only two or three persons
now living. It
is a fortunate circumstance, that, in this copy,
almost the
whole history of the Bill can be read. In spite
of cancella-
tions and interlineations, the original words
can easily be
distinguished from those which were
inserted in the
committee or on the report. . . . The bill will
be found
among the Archives of the House of Lords. It
is strange
that this vast collection of important
documents should
have been altogether neglected, even by our
most exact and
diligent historians. It was opened to me by
one of the
most valued of my friends, Mr. John Lefevre ;
and my
researches were greatly assisted by the
kindness of Mr.
Thorns.¹

This large collection of papers has now been
calendared
as far as 1710, partly in the reports
published by the
Historical Manuscripts Commission, partly in

the separate volumes published by the House of Lords itself.

Macaulay also used the records of the Privy Council, though to only a slight extent, and, more systematically, the Treasury records. A modern reader, however, misses in his footnotes one reference which he expects to find in all historical works. There is no mention of the Public Record Office, or of documents derived from it. On the

*!!!, 1394-5 (xi).